



United States Department of Agriculture  
Food and Nutrition Service

Southeast Region

Reply to  
Attn. of: CN 11-1

March 9, 2005

**Subject:** Policy Memorandum 245:06 -17: Food Stamp and Child Nutrition Agreements for Direct Certification

**To:** All State Directors  
National School Lunch Program (NSLP)  
Southeast Region

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 requires that children in food stamp households be directly certified for free school meals. To prepare for the phased in implementation of mandatory direct certification, which begins for the largest school districts in July 2006 and covers all school districts by July 2008, we convened a work group on January 26-27, 2005. Meeting attendees included Federal, State and local administrators of the school meal programs, along with Federal and State Food Stamp Program administrators. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss implementation issues surrounding direct certification and optional direct verification as a result of the new provisions.

To facilitate mandatory direct certification, the law requires Food Stamp and Child Nutrition State agencies to enter into agreements by July 1, 2005. The affected State agencies should be working together now to discuss direct certification and get these agreements in place. While we anticipate your Child Nutrition agency will initiate contact with the Food Stamp State agency, the law makes both agencies responsible for making mandatory direct certification a reality. The agreements must include, at a minimum, a statement that direct certification will take place when required by law, as well as agreement to develop detailed procedures well in advance of implementation.

We are requesting that you provide us with a status report of your actions to implement the direct certification provisions in your State by April 25, 2005. Your information will be consolidated into a regional report that will be forwarded to the National office. Since direct certification of children in food stamp households has been optional for more than a decade, states may have some form of an agreement already in place. However, many, if not all, of these agreements will need to be updated to reflect the new provisions of the law and the advances in technology since they were originally signed.

Please make every effort to facilitate the cooperative relationship between your Child Nutrition agency and the State's Food Stamp agency in implementing the mandatory direct certification provision in accordance with the law. Let us know of any assistance that we can provide you in this process. For your information, a similar memorandum is being issued to the Food Stamp agency in your State.

If you have any questions, contact Lanna Kirk at 404-562-7072 for Child Nutrition Issues and Charlie Simmons 404-562-7030 for Food Stamp issues.

PEGGY FOUTS  
Regional Director  
Special Nutrition Programs

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